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November 1985

Keyboard Magazine

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From The Publisher



higher and higher

AFTER TEN YEARS AS *Keyboard Magazine's* founding editor, Tom Darter is leaving. But not really. Tom has just been elevated to a newly-created position at GPI: He'll be our Director of Publications, working with all three magazines and our Books Division to help the editors make the publications even more useful to musicians.

But who will take over at *Keyboard*, you're wondering. **Dominic Milano**, that's who. After a decade with the magazine as our first assistant editor and art director, and more recently as our technical editor, Dominic has taken on the tough challenge of being the editor, the guiding force who will keep the publication on target as we move into what promises to be the most exciting period in the history of keyboard music.

Keyboard is growing rapidly in circulation, in the size of our issues, and in our impact in the music industry, and Dominic will have his work cut out for him. But we're confident that he'll sail through with flying colors. His ten years at the magazine have given him an encyclopedic knowledge of the field, the wealth of personal contacts with which to make things happen, and the intimate knowledge of magazine production needed to turn raw ideas into pages of black-and-white. Plus, he's an easy-going, all-around nice guy, he's always willing to roll up his sleeves and dig in, and he has the courage to hang in there through tough situations. He's an ideal choice all the way around, and I couldn't be more pleased.

Dominic just left my office after running down all his new ideas for next year's columns and features, and I'm excited about his plans. During the next few months, you'll be learning the details, so stick around.

* * * *

If you turn to page 7 of last month's issue, you'll see an announcement that this month's cover story would be on how today's hot producers are using keyboards in their recording sessions. But as you no doubt noticed, the smiling face of Jerry Harrison of Talking Heads adorns this month's cover. Likewise, back in June we heralded Jan Hammer as the July cover—and then a Kate Bush interview appeared instead.

What's going on? Well, we prefer to work as close to deadline as we can, because we want our cover stories to be timely. (The May cover on Howard Jones, for example, broke a month or two *before* his career started skyrocketing.) So we sometimes announce an upcoming cover before the interview is actually in the can. Most of the time, things work out just the way we hoped.

But once in a while, no matter how accommodating an artist may try to be, scheduling conflicts get in the way. Believe it or not, the people we put on our covers *lots* of things to do besides talk to journalists. We know you want to read their stories, though, so we do our best to reschedule. Jan Hammer had to delay his interview for a couple of months; he gave us not only an interview but an exclusive Soundpage in time for the September issue. And in order to do the producers story the right way (the way only *Keyboard* can do it) we'll be doing nearly a dozen in-depth interviews in the next couple of months. Look for the finished product in '86—and thanks for being patient.

STRAIGHT TALK FROM A TALKING HEAD

Jerry Harrison

***And we're not little children
And we know what we want
And the future is certain
Give us time to work it out***

By Greg Armbruster

SUPERFICIALLY IT SEEMS IRONIC that these sentiments are expressed in a song called "Road To Nowhere," from Talking Heads' latest LP, *Little Creatures*. But in many ways the title and the lyrics are descriptive of the group's musical philosophy: The road they're traveling leads to where they already are—the future is now, and the process of becoming is the magic of the present moment.

"Our music combines intuition with investigation," explains Jerry Harrison, keyboardist for Talking Heads since 1977. From their early investigations of techniques and textures in the studio with synthesist/philosopher Brian Eno to their visually profound live concert film, *Stop Making Sense*, Harrison, guitarist/vocalist David Byrne, bassist Tina Weymouth, and percussionist Chris Frantz have continued to explore and expand their musical potentials, both as a band and as individuals. "When we spend time apart from each other, we go to different places, meet different people, and do different things," Harrison declared in his April '83 *Keyboard* interview. "So when we come back together, we're able to help the band grow through that diversity."

That's one of the reasons why Harrison is back in Milwaukee, where he was born in 1949, working on a new solo album and producing a record for the Violent Femmes. An English group called It's Immaterial also

wants him for producer, and keyboardist Raymond Jones [Chic] wants him to write a solo piano piece to be included with similar works by such diverse composers as Kate Pierson [B-52's], George Duke, and Howard Jones, for a recorded piano recital performed by an as-yet-to-be-disclosed artist. Of course, things have always been a bit diverse for Harrison, who has never been content to continue in any one musical path for long, and who admits that he's "always trying to make up new things."

In grade school, he started on piano but soon added clarinet and saxophone lessons. His early band experiences were a quilt of contrasts, including a country band, a rhythm and blues group, a tour and album [*Night Lights*] with singer/songwriter Elliott Murphy, and a three-year stint starting in '71 with Jonathan Richman's Modern Lovers. It was in Richman's rock and roll band that he took up the guitar, even though he continued to play a Rhodes electric piano and a Farfisa Mini-Compact organ. *The Original Modern Lovers* LP, first released on the Beserkley label, introduced Harrison's talents to Talking Heads, at the time a trio. In '76, Harrison played with the Heads for the first time, but it wasn't until the spring of '77 that he joined. He was about to study architecture at Cambridge when the opportunity presented itself. After one semester, though, he knew where his future lay.

There was a period of adjustment while the band incorporated keyboards into its sound. In fact, the first side of the 1977 live recording, *The Name Of This Band Is Talking Heads*, features Harrison playing rhythm guitar. By '79 and *Fear Of Music*, keyboards were a firmly established part of the arrangements and Harrison was deeply involved in

collaborating with Byrne on new material. The period between '78 and '80 was also the time when Eno was involved with the group. His contributions are evident on *Fear Of Music* as well as *More Songs About Buildings And Food* and *Remain In Light*.

After the experimental *Remain In Light*, where all the band members switched instruments and created the songs while jamming together, they took a year's hiatus in order to concentrate on solo projects. Harrison recorded *The Red And The Black* with the help of keyboardist Bernie Worrell and guitarist Adrian Belew (see our interview with Worrell on page 54). "I tried many different styles of songwriting," he recalls. "That's why it's exhausting to listen to all the way through." And while it may not have been a geyser in the charts, it did release a flow of creativity that swept through the arrangements on the Talking Heads' *Speaking In Tongues* album and helped propel Byrne's theatrical lyrics in *Stop Making Sense* toward widespread public awareness without sacrificing artistic credibility.

The visual aspect of their music is not an accident. "All of us have been involved in the visual arts throughout our lives," Harrison explains. "It's very easy for us to see the way things relate in visual contexts. That's one of the reasons why we've been pretty inventive in our videos as well as our album covers. And I don't think it's a matter of training, although obviously that helps. It's really a matter of talent." And that doesn't seem to be in short supply with these four musicians. Their latest album, *Little Creatures*, testifies to yet another 'new' direction in their development: back-to-basics with high-tech help from an E-mu Emulator, two Yamaha DX7s, and a Sequential Prophet-T8.

Lyrics © 1985 Index Music/Bleu Disque Music.



Between sessions with the Violent Femmes in Milwaukee last September, Jerry Harrison smiles enigmatically in front of his MIDled keyboard stack, which includes (top to bottom) a Yamaha DX7, an E-mu Emulator II, and a Sequential Prophet-T8. The Macintosh has a built-in Hyper-Drive hard-disk unit, and is running Digidesign software. And just in case there's a power failure, Harrison's trusty Hohner Melodica (sitting atop the computer shelves) is always available.

"In many ways, *Little Creatures* was a very traditional kind of album," Harrison admits. "I used the keyboards very traditionally for chordal accompaniments." Which is a far cry from the complex keyboard arrangements on *Speaking In Tongues* and the dense orchestrations so prevalent on *The Red And The Black*. But there is another aspect of simplicity via technology: Talking Heads can perform *Little Creatures* live without doubling the number of musicians onstage. "There has been a misconception that Talking Heads is a nine-piece band," Harrison points out, "but it's the four of us that come up with all the parts, basically."

Currently, the band is scattered across the country working on individual projects. For Harrison, the biggest things are his solo album, a new upcoming Byrne film soundtrack, and producing the Violent Femmes' third album. "My philosophy in producing is

to bring out the people I'm working with as much as possible," he says. Of course, that's not a new idea for Harrison: He applies the same philosophy to himself. His own solo effort, which is more than half finished, has taken a new turn from his first solo album. Technology has affected the sounds, the organization, and recording process, while current events have shaped the lyrics.

Where is Harrison headed? How is he coming up with new ideas for his own compositions? Is he sampling the bees or stopping to smell the flowers? When we caught up with him in his home town, he was sequestered in a friend's basement studio, mixing sounds with the fanatic dedication of a professional alchemist. But before he leaped behind his keyboard stack to show us the secrets of his techniques, we had to seek some answers to the *Stop Making Sense* phenomenon. How can a band film a live

concert and mesmerize an already MTV-overdosed audience? There's more to Talking Heads than just talking heads.

* * * *

STOP MAKING SENSE is unique among current concert movies, not only for its widespread popularity but also for its critical acclaim. Has this been the artistic high-point in the ten-year history of Talking Heads?

We found that it was. Of course, I think the high-point now is our latest album [*Little Creatures*], or whatever I'm working on presently; but *Stop Making Sense* had such a sense of history to it, and that gives it a special place in our hearts. You do albums in succession, and though one may be a favorite of yours, *Stop Making Sense* was kind of an end cap to a period in the band's life—a summation of a number of tours that we had done, beginning with the tour where we decided

TALKING HEADS

BERNIE WORRELL

Adds The P. Funk Dimension



Worrell on Sequential Prophet-5 (L) shares the stage with Harrison on Prophet-10 (R).

By Robert Seidenberg

JAMES BROWN, SLY STONE, AND JIMI Hendrix may be the Trinity of contemporary black American pop music, but Parliament/Funkadelic is just as holy. For twenty years, and under various names (Parliament, Funkadelic, P. Funk All-Stars), this band released uncompromising music that was guzzled by funkaholics (it wasn't watered down enough for mainstream listeners). George Clinton and his wacked-out imagination masterminded the group, but playing Secretary of State to Clinton's President was musical director Bernie Worrell, who orchestrated the sound heard 'round the funk world.

It was Worrell who, on "Flash Light" (from the 1977 *Funkentelechy Vs. The Placebo Syndrome*), was one of the first keyboardists to lay down a funk bass line on Minimoog. Even Stevie Wonder paid tribute to Worrell's funk mastery. "He used to come to our shows in Detroit," Worrell recalls, "and sit right in front with his little portable keyboard and play along with us." And it was Bernie who, with his rigorous classical training, made P. Funk more than a dance band. Thanks to him, the tunes were as much for the ears as for the feet. [Ed. Note: For more about Worrell's association with P. Funk and his musical background, see Keyboard, Sept. '78.]

In the four years since he split with P. Funk, the 42-year-old Worrell has added his more-than-a-dash-of-funk to records by artists ranging from Fela to Public Image, from the Last Poets to Nona Hendryx, and from Toure Kunda to, most recently, the Rolling Stones. But his greatest contribution this decade has been to Talking Heads. When

David Byrne expanded his prototype new wave quartet into a nine-piece band embracing African polyrhythms and layered funk grooves, Worrell was the first musician recruited. Byrne knew that if anybody could help develop such a musical fusion it would be Worrell. Not only because Bernie had been a giant star in the P. Funk solar system, but also because of his openness to new sounds and his desire to play with a variety of musicians.

On the P. Funk discs, Worrell's shocking polytonalities and compelling bass lines leap off the vinyl. With Talking Heads, he offsets the groove with electronic squeaks and squawks and occasional burning Clavinet solos. He's always in control of his instruments, yet he never sacrifices a sense of spontaneity and revelation for technical virtuosity. In studio sessions he embellishes what's already there—he's not interested in stealing the spotlight. Worrell's conversation is crowded with abstractions, socio-political musings, and jokes. He doesn't like to talk about his gear or analyze his technique. Instead, he discusses playing what he feels, and the different vibes given off by various instruments.

* * * *

HOW DID YOUR ASSOCIATION with Talking Heads come about?

Jerry Harrison called first, and then the manager, after they found out about the breakup between George Clinton, myself, and P. Funk. They asked if I would be interested in playing with them. I didn't know anything about their music at the time, so I met them at the Ritz in New York when I went to see another group. They had been fans of mine and P. Funk, so knowing about

Continued on page 81

JERRY HARRISON

to hire extra musicians, which we needed to perform all the parts we had played as a four-some on the *Remain In Light* album. Each tour was getting better, and we were learning how to retain the discipline and yet the openness that we had when we were a four-some with that many people. We felt so excited about the *Stop Making Sense* tour that we decided it should be filmed. Everyone said it would be a failure when we set out to do it: Rock movies were boring and passé. But we went ahead and did it. We had to invest our own money, but there's something very satisfying about going against the odds and putting your money where your mouth is and having it work out.

What did you think would set your movie apart from the average *passé* concert movie?

Among other things, we knew that it was a very dynamic show, visually as well as aurally, so there wouldn't be a burden put on the director and the camera crew to create false excitement. We also had some very strict views about concert movies in general. We all felt that many concert movies had been spoiled by cutting away in the midst of a song, and that there were people out there that felt the same way. As musicians and serious listeners we wanted to hear it through to its completion. I can think of a film of Jimi Hendrix, which had some fantastic performances in it, but every time they stopped, I went, "Oh God, no; now we've got to listen to those boring guys talk about what it was like to know Jimi."

You didn't do anything for the film that you wouldn't normally do in concert?

No. The only thing we did was cut out a few songs, because we thought the concert was too long. Also, the real concert had an intermission, but we knew there wasn't going to be any intermission in the film. There were a couple of slight lighting changes, but very, very little. And in fact, we're going to re-include the songs we deleted from the movie when it comes out on videotape. Each medium has something special about it, and we've always tried to take advantage of that. We've often made our cassettes a little longer and with slightly different mixes than the albums, because tape doesn't have the same time format as an album, where you sacrifice sound quality if you go over 20 or 21 minutes.

What was the underlying philosophy for adding musicians one at a time with each song at the beginning of the concert?

In a somewhat allegorical way, it told the history of the group. It also provided a sense of narration for the band as it was building on stage; the blocks of equipment were also building. So we started with an empty stage and ended up with a stage filled with musicians, equipment, and screens with slides. It went from A to Z that way. It seems like an obvious thing, to start with something very spare and go to something very complicated, but I think that the way it was done was quite special.

What keyboards were used for *Stop Making Sense*?

We used an Emulator I, a Clavinet, and

JERRY HARRISON

two [Sequential] Prophet-5s—the rev 2 Prophet-5s, which to me are the best sounding Prophets ever made. There's something about the way the filters sound, and I really like the modulation: It has a softer warble to it than other Prophets. Anyway, one keyboard setup includes a Prophet-5 and the Clavinet, and the other has a Prophet-5 and the Emulator. They were positioned right next to each other so Bernie [Worrell] and I could switch sometimes, although generally Bernie plays the Clavinet stack, because he really is such a master of the Clavinet.

Did you use the built-in sequencer on the Emulator for the fast organ arpeggio at the beginning of "Once In A Lifetime" [Stop Making Sense]?

No, we never use sequencers. And except for a very simple thing on the *Remain In Light* album, we've never used a sequencer on a record, either. Every time I've rehearsed with a sequencer, it would seem to vary in tempo. There's something about rigid time that's fascinating, but there's also something nice about a part that breathes when it's played, even though it's not as rigidly in time. And why not just play the part?

Are your keyboard solos in "Life During Wartime," "Girlfriend Is Better," and "Burning Down The House" (Stop Making Sense) as carefully worked out as your ensemble parts, or are they different each time?

They're pretty much new each time. There are certain things I keep from night to night, but things evolve over time. Also, I'm

"We use outside projects to maintain a sense of newness. We don't ever want to get to the point where we're doing things by rote."



Talking Heads meet the press (L to R): bassist Tina Weymouth, drummer Chris Frantz, guitarist/singer David Byrne, and Harrison.

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JERRY HARRISON

not very good at remembering exactly what I play: I just play it. I think of myself as a 'feel' player, and very often I don't perfect a part. I think what happens is that I spend time creating a backlog not only of musical knowledge—riffs or whatever—but of ways of attacking a problem. Then you attack it that way each time. Sometimes I perfect a method of attack by analyzing the problem, but sometimes I just keep changing my approach to the keyboard part until I get inside the music, rather than have it seem like the part has been glued on.

Do you apply this 'change until you get inside the music' philosophy only to your keyboard playing?

No, it would be with any musical instrument that I play. But I think that's almost a greater problem now with synthesizers. A lot of times, very synthesized sounds really stick out. Of course, if you've built the song around them, then they are part and parcel of the song. But when you put these sounds with other songs, they sometimes seem out of place. It can sound like a bad jam: So-and-so's in the audience, so he gets up and plays with the band. What's this guy doing? It's like waiting for the solo to end.

How would you describe your keyboard style?

It developed from often playing rhythmic parts with both hands; the hands play bass and treble elements that are integrated into one part. I'm not usually trying to play a bass line with one hand, and another part with my

"I see myself as a thinker about music, rather than as a player of music. I play music in order to get the ideas out."



right; I'm usually trying to put one part together that's rhythmic and integrated.

Has playing guitar, especially rhythm guitar, affected your keyboard technique, or has rhythmic keyboard playing influenced your

guitar playing?

I think it goes back and forth, but the primary effect of playing different instruments has been to encourage me to find the right sound and the right instrument for the

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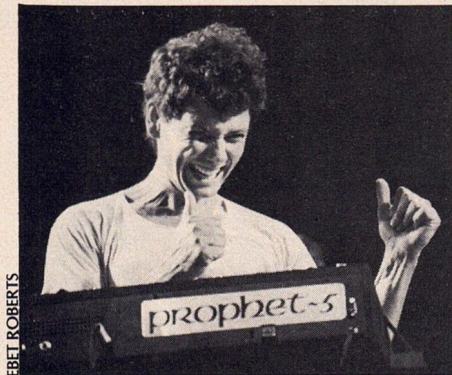
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one instrument to another. You might not have the technique as together, but you have

“Everyone said the Stop Making Sense movie would be a failure. Rock movies were boring and passé. But we went ahead and did it.”

your knowledge of music together. And just that jolt when you’re confronted with a new instrument can sometimes cause you to come up with new things. That’s not to say that you would ever throw away your technique on your chosen instrument—you shouldn’t abandon it—but I think that if you rely on that one technique only, you will eventually become static in what you do.

Sometimes you have to swallow your pride and start over on a new instrument in

order to get a new creative direction?

Exactly. And as I said before, I think simple, direct parts are often the ones that are most memorable. One of the most memorable guitar lines of all time was that opening riff in “Satisfaction.” It’s not something that [Mahavishnu guitarist] John McLaughlin played. By changing the way you’re looking at things and changing your instrument, you can sometimes get at the essence of what you’re trying to say. I know of painters who had gotten into painting incredibly small and detailed scenes and they would make themselves paint with big wide housepainting brushes, or tie the brushes to their elbows; just do anything to get more of a sense of gesture into their painting. This is not to say that they never went back to their original style. But they felt that they had to free themselves from their training and free themselves from their perceptions of the way they had been thinking. Musicians need to do that too.

If one of the non-keyboardists came up with a part, like the synthesizer lines in “Slippery People,” during the process of recording Speaking In Tongues, by the time the song was played on Stop Making Sense, would you or Bernie have taken over actually playing the part?

That’s true, except for the bass parts that Tina [Weymouth] played on that little Micromoog synthesizer she used in the movie for that galloping bass line on “Burning Down The House.” There was another tune where she would alternate playing bass guitar and synthesizer, playing a note on one and then a note on the other—which worked really well.

There’s quite an unusual keyboard solo on “Burning Down The House.” Who plays the part, and which instruments are used?

That’s a Prophet-5. Originally, Wally Badarou played a number of parts in that song on the *Speaking In Tongues* album. Bernie played them in the movie. The parts are so dynamic, so important to the song. And even though they’re not played exactly the same way each night, the flavor and feeling is the same. We used to use a Touch-Wah [Roland T-Wah] on some of those things, and I’ve used it on “Girlfriend Is Better.” It’s like a wah-wah pedal, and it gives a sucking quality to the sound. I also use slight amounts of modulation, which creates a sense of pitch-bend, although you don’t always know which way it’s going to bend. With a fairly slow modulation rate it adds a kind of warble to the tone that I really like.

Did you change keyboards for Little Creatures?

Quite a lot. I’d been working on a new solo album, and I finally decided that with so many new keyboards coming out, I had to familiarize myself with them. I ended up buying two [Yamaha] DX7s, an Emulator II,

ZAWNUL ON CHROMA POLARIS.

“After a month of ferocious traveling over land, water and sky—and 18 hard-played concerts—the Chroma” Polaris” has proven itself a real warhorse. It has a great keyboard feel. The tuning is amazing. (I only had to tune it twice.) It has some real usable factory presets, including an inverted keyboard preset. Very easy to program. Overall, a real fine instrument.”

and a Prophet-T8. So the sounds on *Little Creatures* all came from those keyboards. Generally for each sound, I would use the MIDI system, with the Prophet-T8 as my master keyboard. The T8 keyboard is really wonderful, but I did have a problem with sending velocity information to the DX7. For some reason, the output of the DX7 was much stronger when triggered by MIDI than when played directly. There is a modification or adjustment for that, but I didn't have it, so I often had to reroute the sounds for the technique that was required to play the part.

Have the new keyboards required you to make changes in your technique?

The new keyboards, with their touch sensitivity and greater range of sound at the

"Every time I've rehearsed with a sequencer, it would seem to vary in tempo. There's something about rigid time that's fascinating, but there's also something nice about a part that breathes."

upper and lower ends, have made me realize that I missed out when I didn't take piano lessons a lot longer than I did. I wish now I could read music much better than I can. That would be my advice to upcoming keyboard players. There was a time when playing in rock bands, particularly if you played with both hands on an electric piano or organ, just cluttered up the sound of the band. So I ended up playing lots of four- and five-note

chords with both hands. I developed a sense of trying to set rhythms between my left and right hands that would be heard as single parts, so that they wouldn't take up all the space, leaving no room for the guitars. But these new instruments have such diversity; first of all, you can divide the keyboard, and second, people who have wonderful keyboard technique can now take advantage of touch sensitivity.

Are your musical ideas, which have been inspired by your new keyboards, sometimes too hard for you to actually play? Or have you finally decided to take advantage of sequencers?

Well, I certainly use the studio to its advantage. I would say that the main disadvantage that I have is that I don't have the independence of hands to be able to play two or three parts at once, rather than an inability to play any of the given parts. Usually I can play any part that I want to play, but I can't always play a bass line that goes with a particularly syncopated or complicated right hand part all at the same time. I think I could if I spent a lot of time doing it. But since I have this other option [recording] sitting right in front of me, I end up using that. When you're sitting at a piano by yourself, there are techniques for independent hand movement to achieve a bass line, a chord part, and a moving melody line. If you've spent your time learning those techniques, then other options are open for you. But with multi-track recording being so readily at hand, why should I spend years learning how to do that?

So you don't practice on a keyboard to keep up your technique?

Not really; although I should. My problem is that when I get involved in making a record it absorbs me so totally that I don't have a lot of time for rehearsal or practice. I'm concentrating very hard when I lay down a part. Sometimes the problem with exercise and practice is that you do it with your mind someplace else, and you don't get out of it what you're supposed to get out of it. When I have the tape running, I do; that's what keeps me sharp. I primarily see myself as a thinker about music, rather than as a player of music. I play music in order to get the ideas out. I also spend time thinking about what kind of music I want to play, and what kind of statement I want the music to make.

The arrangements on Little Creatures are much less dense, in terms of keyboard orchestrations and percussion parts, than on previous albums. What kind of statement were you making?

We put a higher premium on melody on this album. And because of that we didn't want to take away from the melodies by overly saturating the rhythmic aspect. Still, there are some great syncopations and feels on the album, but they're more on the sur-

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face of the melodies rather than standing out in front. Also, this is a more chordally complex album. *Speaking In Tongues* and *Remain In Light* were largely made up of one-key or one-key/one-chord songs. It was like we were in a mode and could play chords or melodies that would go within or against the mode, but you were always there. That kind of feeling is much simpler and much more attuned to the idea of complicated rhythms, because there's a sense of knowing exactly where you are—there's a reference point with that pedal tone. Once you start going through more complicated chord changes to allow for a greater melodic structure, rhythms must serve the chord changes as well, or you get a conflict between them. More complex

"If you rely on one technique only, you will eventually become static in what you do."

melodies changed the nature of how we used percussion.

Did it also change the nature of how you used keyboards?

Sure; I think it meant that in some ways I used keyboards in a more traditional way, as chordal accompaniments. And I had to make sure that the listener understood that the chords were changing, that there was this backbone for the melodies and the background vocals to fit over. The songs themselves were done in a very traditional way. All of them were written prior to recording. We

rehearsed at a little rehearsal studio in New York and worked out most of the parts and overdubs. Then we went in and laid down the basic tracks, the overdubs, some rough vocals, and then slowly added a few other things. It was a very organized process, particularly for us. It was not so studio-dependent as most of the other projects we've been doing.

You mentioned earlier that Little Creatures was an artistic milestone for Talking Heads—in what way?

I think this is a very American album. The references in this album are very American, rather than Third World or some other references that we've made at other times. "Creatures Of Love" has a country feel, and there's another song that, to me, has a rockabilly influence. We're not doing those kinds of music specifically; they're all blended together. Those are part of our musical heritage. We've been known sometimes for finding things or looking for things that are very outside the normal spectrum of where most musicians have looked, and that's one thing that we've been influential in showing: that there are many diverse musics that can be integrated into pop music. But I think we wanted to say, and ended up saying, that there are all these 'normal' musical styles and traditions, the ones that we've all grown up with, that are equally valid. You don't have to look for something strange to make it valid. Something that's familiar can be put in another context and be made to sound just as important as something totally strange.

So as far as your keyboard contributions to the album, instead of looking for strange synthesized sounds, you combined traditional sounds in new contexts?

On this record, we wouldn't imitate an instrument if it was available; we'd just use that instrument. Even though we used MIDled keyboards, we really went for very natural sounds. One of the only parts that I play that particularly sounds like a synthesized line is in "Television Man." Most of the other sounds have quite a natural quality to them: It was a real Hammond organ ["Walk It Down"], accordian ["Road To Nowhere"], steel guitar ["Creatures Of Love"], and piano ["Stay Up Late"]. Come to think of it, I guess in one place I did use the Emulator piano.

Are you using more sampled sounds now?

I like combining some sampled sounds with synthesized sounds. But if you want a piano, I feel that you should go get a piano, and if you want a clarinet, go get a clarinetist. I like the idea of making sounds that have, say, the nature of a clarinet, but have obviously been tampered with. I don't necessarily spend time trying to make things sound real; I just make them sound the way I like them to sound. I like the tool of sampling quite a lot, because you can combine such disparate sounds. I also like to blend the brilliance of the DX7's top end with the

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Is that how you got the big, punchy horn section in "Television Man"?

That was a combination of real horns and synthesized horns—Lenny Pickett played the real horns. There are three or four parts for every note, split between the real and synthesized horns. By the way, when we were working with some of the horn harmonies, I would write down the parts so that I could figure out whether or not there might be a clash of parts, or whether there was an obvious thing that we could try that no one was hearing. This is the first record where I ever started writing what I was playing. It was during the overdubs that I realized it would take me quite a while just to figure out the

parts again.

Since you've made the plunge into digital synthesizers and sampling machines, are drum machines the next step?

We've used them; I use them. I've been using them a lot lately, and I used them when I was making my solo album [*The Red And The Black*]. It was a way to get certain stuff underway at home. Sometimes I'd have a drummer replace the part and sometimes I'd have the drummer play along to the machine part. In Talking Heads we've used them very sparingly and not in a normal sense: We've used them as metronomes, which were later erased. We knew that if we wanted to edit later, the tempo would be the same from beginning to end. And that's really about it. Chris has an Oberheim DMX and uses it sometimes, but at the time when we would

have most gotten into it, we just never went that far into the technology of all those things. When we recorded *Speaking In Tongues*, I tried starting a few things with a sequencer, but then, like I said, there seemed to be this drifting quality to the tempo and we just got sick of it, so everything was played. By the time we got to *Little Creatures*, we were trying to do things in a very un-machinelike way; we were trying to get away from machines, drum machines as well as overtly synthesized sounds.

How far along are you with your second solo album?

I'm about two thirds of the way done with it; that's really what has been occupying me lately. I came back to Milwaukee so I could take care of my mother after my father died, and I found a little studio that was in a friend's basement. So I started working there, and I brought in Alex Weir, who was the rhythm guitarist in *Stop Making Sense*. Then I started having other people drop in and play when they passed through town, like [guitarist] Rob McIntosh from The Pretenders and [drummer] David Van Tieghem and [saxophonist] Dickie Landry from Laurie Anderson's band. I've also used some people around here. One of the things I'm trying to show with this album, and with an album I'm producing with the Violent Femmes, is that good records don't necessarily have to be made in New York. Yes, I've lived in New York and I know that I can make good records in New York. There are wonderful musicians there and I don't want to take anything away from them. But there are other places in the country that have good people, and where the mystery of equipment can be solved. I hate it when there's such a sense of, "I can't make a record here; I have to go to the places where the magicians do their work." I think if people sit down and listen hard enough and get some experience,

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JERRY HARRISON: A SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Solo Releases:

The Red And The Black, Sire (dist. by Warner Bros.), SRK-3631.

"5 Minutes" (12" single with William Bootsy Collins), Sleeping Bag Records (1974 Broadway, New York, NY 10023), SLX-666-13.

With Talking Heads:

Fear Of Music, Sire, K-6076.

Little Creatures, Sire, 1-25305.

More Songs About Buildings And Food, Sire, K-6058.

The Name Of This Band Is Talking Heads, Sire, 2SR-3590.

Remain In Light, Sire, SRK-6095.

Speaking In Tongues, Sire, 1-23771.

Stop Making Sense, Sire, 1-25121.

Talking Heads '77, Sire, SR-6036.

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How does your new album differ from your first solo LP?

In some ways, I think the first album had an intellectual backdrop, which used the polyrhythms that Talking Heads had begun working on with *Remain In Light*. I had tried to use that sense of polyrhythm in some of the songs I'd written prior to *Remain In Light*, and to use it within other time signatures besides 4/4. I wanted to do that in a song structure so that a listener who was not paying a lot of attention would just think it was a song and would be able to count along and dance to it. I felt that some sort of unique feel could be gotten that way, and in some ways, *The Red And The Black* succeeded in doing

just that. For this album, I haven't attempted that. I just started writing songs, working on them, and doing them. It didn't have that sense of investigation.

Do you write at a keyboard?

I've been writing in the studio, because this studio has that feeling of a home studio, which is just the opposite of how we did *Little Creatures*, but it's what we did for *Remain In Light*. Sometimes there are such wonderful performances which you do the first time you try the idea, and everytime you attempt to perfect it, you take something away from what you did at first. You can get that first-time performance by being in the studio and composing in the studio.

Do you write the words first?

No, I write the words to the music after the music is written. I've done that for both

solo albums.

*Is that why the lyrics in *The Red And The Black* sound so serious? They were in response to the density of the music itself?*

[Laughs.] I think it came off that way, and I don't know why it did, because I think there are some things that are very funny in it; some of the lyrics are quite stupid. I find, though, that when I listen to that album all the way through, I get exhausted. I really think it's better to listen to one or two songs from the album at a time, because when you go through all of them it's exhausting. At least I find that it just doesn't take in as well as a whole, because I tried many different styles of songwriting, and different styles of music.

What was the intellectual backdrop for this album that you referred to earlier?

When I was writing that album I was convinced that the world was heading toward some sort of war. I felt that war was very imminent. I called it *The Red And The Black* because when I was in college there used to be these political pamphlets that were distributed by a group called the Situationists. The pamphlets were called the red and the black, referring to the communists and the anarchists. I also liked the color combination, which had nothing to do with [author] Stendahl. I thought we were really heading for war, which has actually proven to be quite true to some extent, and that's what "Worlds In Collision" was about. It was supposed to represent the First, Second, and Third Worlds on a collision course.

And the following cut, "The Red Nights," represents the aftermath of that collision? It sounds a little like a Pink Floyd soundtrack to 2001.

Yeah, I thought that the way those two worked together was quite amazing. But I just do the music and then later realize that it sounds like something else. Sometimes you decide, "Well, I'm going to deliberately change it because it does sound too much like something else." Then again, sometimes you just say, "Screw it; it sounds good."

Is the new album more optimistic?

I guess so. I think that I'd rather write an album that's optimistic rather than pessimistic. But I still have a serious side. The album that I'm working on now has a song that takes place in El Salvador and tells the story of this guy who drives for the death squads. I had read in descriptions of El Salvador, particularly in that Joan Didion book [*A Book Of Common Prayer*], that the guys in the death

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squads drive around in armor-plated Jeep Cherokee Chiefs with machine guns. So I wrote this song called "Cherokee Chief," that's really like a teenage car song. It's about how his life was really shitty, and now he's got this great car and his life has meaning. What I like about it is that you can listen to it in a number of ways. You can realize that it's about a fairly heavy topic, but you can also get into it in the same way that you'd get into any car song. And the third aspect is that I don't have entirely negative feelings towards this person. His option was to be perhaps the person who would be fired upon, rather than the person doing the firing. He could be one of the trampled innocents out in the field; he has a choice. He doesn't see himself in both

places, but he knows where he came from and that he had very few options. And this is the option he chose, his pact with the Devil, and he takes great solace in the power he now has through his jeep. You might say it's not unmitigated evil—it's an evil that comes about because this person had terrible options and this is the one that he chose. He pays a terrible price, but it was attractive to him because it was the only one that really gave him any sense of personal power. I must say, talking about it is much heavier than what the song sounds like.

How do the keyboard parts support words like this if in fact you wrote and recorded the music before you came up with the lyrics?

I try to get a sense from the sound of the music of what it suggests, and that's how I

would write the lyrics to it. But then once you've recorded the vocal you might add another keyboard part or guitar part that directly supports the lyrics. This time, I tried to write the words midway through the production, rather than how I did *The Red And The Black*. In other words, not every aspect of the music had been written before the vocals went down. The general gist of the song was sitting there, but after I put down the vocal I could see what else needed to be added.

What other songs are on the new album?

The one I like the most has a soundtrack quality, but it's a song about people in love who can beat the odds by just who they are. They're in the right place at the right time, like a person who walks across a mine field because he just decides he's going to, but if anyone else walked across they'd get blown up—that kind of 'getting away with it.'

Are there any unusual things you're doing with synthesizers to get your lyrical points across better?

Unfortunately, this album got delayed. When I first starting working on it, it was right when some of these new instruments came out. The way I used them you now hear on other albums, although I don't think that takes away from the sense of the songs. The big thing was that I tried blending various timbres together to make them sound unique, either through MIDI or through playing things twice. One of the problems these days is that almost every synthesizer sound that you hear on albums is from someone's library. You'll hear a sound and go, "Oh, yeah, that's patch #225 in the Bo Tomlyn program library." You have a huge range of programs that are available to anyone who decides to pay the price. And sometimes the instruments are so complicated to program that you don't really want to bother doing it yourself, especially when you have all these sounds available. But that means you can listen to demo tapes and albums and hear all these sounds that you know. I've tried to get away from that by blending various sounds together, and that's really what I've been spending a lot of my time in the studio doing.

You're not using that many effects, then?

Not yet; sometimes I do that as it goes down, sometimes afterwards. Did you hear the thing I did with Ronald Reagan's voice, called "5 Minutes"? The words come from the speech where he joked about bombing Russia in five minutes. I used the Emulator to



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break up his words, and [guitarist] Bootsie Collins plays on it. It's a 12" single on Sleeping Bag Records, but I did it here in Milwaukee.

Which song on your first solo album taught you the most?

I'd say "The New Adventure"—it's my favorite song on the album, too. It's in 5/4; but what's really hard about it, and why most drummers couldn't do it, is that there's a place where I take just the first half of the normal phrase, which combines two bars of five, and play it twice. There's just something about the count that throws you off. Boy, did I have a hard time getting a drummer to play that for me. It finally had to be done one drum at a time; I went out and beat the drums and showed Steve Scales, our percussionist, how to do it. I remember the first time that Nona [Hendryx] put down her background vocal part; she'd always come in at the wrong place. She sat down at the piano and said, "God, I've been in this business for 15 years, and I can't believe that I can't do this." Of course, the more parts we got down, the easier it became, because we started to have more clues as to where parts should come in. But when it was quite spare, the engineer and I were the only people who understood at all what was going on.

Why didn't you program a drum machine to play the part?

I did to begin with, but I only had a Roland drum machine, and it didn't sound good enough to be the drums. Actually, the low bass sound on the track is the bass drum from the Roland drum machine played through a fuzz tone. When you have both the bass drum and the low tom-tom sounding together, it has a pitch that's different than either of those sounds by themselves, so you can get this moving melodic line in the low register. That's how it began, but it wasn't the same part that the drummer played. And at that time, I hadn't invested in a box that would link a bunch of machines together. I hadn't bought a Doctor Click—I don't even know if it was around then. But I always thought it was better to have a live drummer play along anyway, because it would contrast to the rigid thing. I think it's very good when you have the drummer play the straight part while the drum machine plays the more complicated one, although people usually go just the opposite way. When the parts are very fast, sometimes I like that rhythmic pre-

cision; but when a part is just a very basic beat, a rhythm machine can sound so boring.

Anything about your first solo album that you aren't going to do this time?

I think that in some ways I treated my voice very gingerly on the first album. I wasn't really that happy with the sound of my voice. But I've worked on it, and I have a much better idea of where I can take it. My tone quality is more pleasing, although 'pleasing' is such an awful word. I also used an awful lot of background vocals on *The Red And The Black*, and that took away from having a sense of narration, or a sense of a person singing a song. This time I have more confidence in my voice, but my feeling is also, "If there's a problem with my singing, then that's too bad." Actually, if there's one thing I'm not going to do, it's try to make a

release schedule. Last time I felt this pressure to get it done, and get it out on time. That was a mistake; I would have liked to have had a moment at the end when I had finished mixing and mastering to listen more and say, "Is this exactly the way I want it?" Largely it was, but there were times when I would have preferred to have had a little time to edit or just think about it again after I finished it. I'm certainly going to give myself that opportunity on this one.

Have you had one of your own songs on a Talking Heads album?

Not one that I've solely written. I have been involved in writing a number of the songs, but, in general, most of them have started with David. He had demo tapes for the songs on *Little Creatures*. So we started with his lyrics and guitar part, and some sug-

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gestions for other parts, then all of us made suggestions and built from there. For *Speaking In Tongues*, obviously since it began as a jam, we were all credited with writing the music. In some ways, the album that I had the most influence on would be *Fear Of Music*. I was working closely with David during the time he was first fomenting some ideas, and got involved in the songwriting then. How we do songwriting ebbs and flows, because David is the singer and he has to sing the songs. Starting from scratch with something that one of the others has written just hasn't worked out very well. He feels at a bit of a loss as to what to do about the vocal. So composition has worked best as a collaborative effort.

Does that mean that the words are the most important aspect of a Talking Heads song?

I would never have said that the words were more important than the music on our albums. Not at all. But I do think that David's sense of melody and his vocal ability have developed to the point where he can carry the new songs on the strength of his voice. The first place you really saw that was in the *Stop Making Sense* movie soundtrack. Before that, he still had somewhat of a scratchiness in his voice. The movie was a quantum leap, even from *Speaking In Tongues*, although David's vocal ability was certainly more developed at that time. So it's been a process: On each album he's had more ways that he could use his voice than he could use on the album. One of those ways was a more traditional song format, and by this album, he really has arrived much more clearly as a singer in a normal sense—a singer with a rich pure tone and a clearer sense of pitch.

But you still contend that the texture and quality of the music itself is one step above the words in importance?

Well, I don't know if I would say 'one step above,' but it certainly is to me. Of course, that's what I'm involved with the most. But, for instance, I think the fact that we have been very popular in foreign countries where people really didn't understand the words testifies to the power of the music. And when I see that other bands have imitated us, it's not so much the lyric content as the musical ideas we developed.

Are these musical ideas the result of Talking Heads the quartet or Talking Heads the

nine-piece band?

I think that we've gotten away from the large group, in the fact that we wouldn't need more people, or as many people, to play *Little Creatures* live. There's been a mistaken observation that *Speaking In Tongues* and *Remain In Light* were played by the 9-person band, and that really isn't the case. *Remain In Light* was played basically by the four of us, with Brian Eno the fifth player. There were solos by [guitarist] Adrian Belew and Jon Hassell [trumpet/horns], and some extra percussion. On *Speaking In Tongues*, we used Alex Weir's rhythm guitar on a couple of things because he was trying out with us at that point, so it was a good way to let him audition. Bernie played on one song, and we used some percussion and some voices. I think that because people see us

playing live that way, they think that's the way the parts were written. I would love to do an album with all nine of us, but the one time we tried recording with all these people *en masse* in the studio, it was just too discom-bobulated to really feel right. So we went back to working just as a four-piece.

During the recording of Little Creatures, were you cognizant of the fact that just the four of you could play it live? Did that change anything that might have been added to the album?

It wasn't our ambition to do that, but when you listen to the parts you can see that there's not such a crosscurrent of musical ideas going that it would be impossible for the four of us to play it live. We're going to have to see just how large a group we'll need when we get more material. It would be hard

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to deny that the power of all those people onstage is something that really makes our show something special, and we have such a wonderful rapport together that there's certainly nothing we're going to throw away.

Does the four-piece usually lay down the basic tracks together?

Well, we do them all at once, but the drums are the primary thing, because the other instruments can be replaced, and often are: There's not all that much attention put to having exactly the right sound. However, we've already begun work on our next album, which is going to be the soundtrack to David's movie, *True Stories*. We did some of the basic tracks for that while we were mixing *Little Creatures*, and those we did as a

live band. When we went back to see if we could improve the tracks, they sounded so much better just the way we played them live that we just left them that way. It feels good sometimes to record in the old way; it's exciting. It's nice if you can do both, but it's exciting to do it that way, too.

Is the new movie a concert?

No, it's a plot with characters, and David wrote the script. For a while I was helping him with it. Last summer he was looking for other writers to work with in Los Angeles, so I went out and worked with him—we talked about what the background music would be like. Since then, he's found it difficult to work with some of the L.A. writers, and has ended up writing it himself, basically. At one time we were all going to be actors in the movie, but we realized that we would all get into a

discussion about the script. It just made more sense for it to be a movie that David was directing using professional actors, but there are scenes in it that use Talking Heads videos, and we will be in those. Also, in the movie the characters will sing the songs, whereas on the album, we do.

Can you give us an idea what the film is about?

Have you ever seen the Alan Bates movie *King Of Hearts*? I'd say that's the closest thing to it. It has a great deal of charm, with 'found' characters put together. A lot of the characters were sort of developed from articles in *The National Enquirer* or *The Star*, and then a plot was written that included their personal stories, so there's a series of plots. A radio announcer ties it all together. They are in this town in Texas and the story moves to a finale when there is a celebration. There's a parade, a beauty pageant, and various things that combine in the climax of the movie.

What's the scheduled completion date?

I'm not sure. I think we're going down to shoot some parts of the movie that we're all in at the end of September. We should be finishing the soundtrack in December or January, and I think the movie will come out sometime in the spring of 1986. We'll probably be on tour then.

Is there any master plan for the future of Talking Heads?

In a certain way, we'll just go straight ahead. We will make more records, we will do tours, we will make videos, and we will get involved in outside projects. And those will take us down various paths, but we continue as a group and keep coming back to the fact that, basically, we are a group that makes music together. We use outside projects and outside influences to maintain a sense of newness and a sense of excitement in our direction. We don't ever want to get to the point where we feel like we're doing things by rote. When a song seems like it just springs out of our mouths, then we've hit it on the head. Like the Zen approach to archery: We are the target as well as the arrow. The music of Talking Heads combines investigation with intuition, and somehow comes up with a coherent whole between those two approaches or philosophies.

Where does the feeling come in?

Because we played it; we rely upon our sense of feeling. Like all musicians, we rely on our sense of personal musical history, which allows us to not think about feeling—we just

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Does the Zen philosophy apply if technology is the arrow as a means to the musical target?

One thing that you can see from my talking about how I'm making my own solo album and how we did the last Talking Heads album, which in a way are diametrically opposed, and what I said about studio techniques and how you can use tape, is that I think technology is here for people to use, and yet they shouldn't become tools of that technology. It's always good to go back to acoustic instruments, to go back to whatever the roots are of your understanding of music, and to do things that way, too; because we all become trapped in our ways of working. And one of the advantages of technology is that it's given people who maybe could never have been musicians before a chance to be musicians now. Think about what demo tapes sound like today: People use rhythm machines and the beat is solid. When I first started playing in bands, what always set a decent band apart from a bad band was the drummer. And when bands had terrible drummers it hardly mattered whether anyone could do anything else, because the drums were really weak. That's been solved by rhythm machines, especially for demo tapes. Another thing is that with home recording gear people can make quite interesting music. In that way, technology has been a boon to musicians. It's also something that you can become a slave to. The secret of not being a slave is to change the way you work and to change the way you approach technology. Go back to the natural instrument and the natural ways of thinking about music. When people who work in electronic music went back to acoustic instruments they thought of them differently, and they sometimes got different sounds out of them. Perhaps they spent more time thinking about the harmonics, or spent more time finding a way to pick a guitar string so that it brought out a sound that seemed more synthesized. To go back and forth, change your work habits, and change the way you do things is all positive. It can jolt you into a new universe of musical ideas.

FOR FURTHER READING

Our previous interview with Jerry Harrison appeared in the April '83 issue of *Keyboard*. Many of the artists mentioned in this

article have also been featured in past issues, including Wally Badarou (*She's The Boss* Profile, May '85), George Duke (July '77, Oct. '79), Brian Eno (July '81), Howard Jones (May '85), Bo Diddley ("Programming The DX7," June '85), and Bernie Worrell (Sept. '78, Nov. '85).

BERNIE WORRELL

Continued from page 54

the breakup, they jumped and asked me. I said, "Yeah, let me check it out and see what it's like." David [Byrne] works the way George [Clinton] does. And Talking Heads works in the studio similar to the way P-Funk did.

In what way?

The way they develop the tunes: starting

from scratch until the tune is finished. The concept of putting ideas down and then after it's done, listening and saying "yes" or "no." The freedom type of thing. Some things are structured, but not everything. You start with the bass line and drums and build from there.

Does Byrne control what's going on in the studio?

Sometimes. I do what I want because they know that's how I work. I play what I feel. There are some times when David might have certain changes that he wants; or he'll be in the control room and Jerry will do whatever and if David likes it, cool, and if he doesn't, they'll talk about it.

Did they have the lineup set for the expanded group by the time they asked you to join?

No, I was the first one. I played with them

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